

TV Show 701

Chapter 701: No Bullying Sheldon Allowed

At the Medical Center

Adam tagged along with Meredith to check on Mrs. Grey in her hospital room. After a thorough examination, Adam suggested starting with some standard treatments to see how things go. Mrs. Grey didn't mind at all—she'd already done her homework to bond with her two daughters' half-sister and knew exactly who Adam was. Naturally, Adam stepped in to handle the routine treatments himself.

But the results? Not so great. Even a legit massage didn't do the trick.

"You do it," Meredith said.

"No, you do it," Adam shot back.

"I can't," she replied.

"You sure I can?" he asked, raising an eyebrow.

In the end—despite it being awkward as heck—the "miracle hiccup-stopping massage" made it onto the treatment plan. But neither Adam nor Meredith wanted to step up. They kept pushing it onto each other like a hot potato. 😊

Meredith had her reasons. She wouldn't admit it out loud, but Mrs. Grey was technically her stepmom. Doing that kind of treatment on someone she had such a complicated, distant relationship with? Way too embarrassing. She couldn't muster the "ignore everything and be professional" vibe.

Adam, on the other hand, could do it. For one, he was a pro. For two, his brain was strong enough to lock away any memories he didn't want to revisit. Still, he wasn't thrilled about it. No way did he want those awkward moments popping back into his head at random times. Plus, Mrs. Grey and Mr. Grey probably wouldn't be cool with him treating her either.

So, in the end, the task landed on Cristina—who rolled her eyes so hard they nearly fell out. 😊 She was the perfect pick: talented, Meredith's bestie, and a female doctor. Adam dragged Cristina into the surgical research room and, under her and Meredith's weirded-out stares, gave a super professional demo of the treatment details.

"Don't ask!" he said, cutting off their curious looks after the demo. "If you're wondering, it's just because I'm a genius!" 🤖

Uh, yeah, that's about it!

Before clocking out, Cristina performed the treatment. The initial results? Surprisingly effective! But whether it'd last was still up in the air. Adam told Mrs. Grey to swing by again tomorrow for a follow-up.

At Duncan Apartments

"Uncle Adam!" Tatiana lit up the second she saw him.

"I heard you've been having nightmares?" Adam said with a grin after giving Heather a quick kiss. He turned to Tatiana. "Want me to mess with Sheldon a little to cheer you up?"

"No way!" Tatiana shouted instantly. "You can't bully Sheldon—he doesn't mean any harm!"

Thanks to Sheldon's giant-baby vibes, both Tatiana and Megan genuinely saw the guy—who was over a decade older than them—as their buddy. No way would they let anyone pick on their pal, not even their favorite Uncle Adam.

"Alright, fine," Adam chuckled. "For our little princess, I'll leave Sheldon alone. But if he's ever mean to you, you've gotta tell me, okay?"

"Okay!" Tatiana nodded eagerly. Though her expression made it pretty clear she wouldn't snitch even if something did happen. 😊

"Little princess, what are you so scared of?" Adam shifted to the real topic.

"I don't know," Tatiana admitted shyly. "I just can't stop having nightmares."

"Is it because Sheldon freaked you out with that 'turning into a butterfly' thing?" Adam asked with a smile. "Look, that's just Sheldon's personal issue—it's got nothing to do with actually becoming a butterfly. He's scared of everything. Deep down, he knows his way of dealing with people makes it easy for everyone, even his sister Missy, to give him a hard time.

"Haven't you noticed? The butterfly Sheldon imagines himself as doesn't even fly. It just lies there, totally still, screaming in fear. That's because in real life, he's terrible at anything physical. Back in high school, he loved going to school to point out every teacher's mistakes—except in PE. To skip even the simplest activities, he lied for the first time to get a sick note. If his mom didn't force him outside, he'd stay cooped up forever. Even then, he'd just push the swing by the door once and call it 'exercise' before heading back in.

"He's so lazy that even as a butterfly, he'd be a total slacker—one that doesn't even flap its wings. Of course a butterfly that can't fly would be in danger! But you? You're different. You're sweet, kind, and well-behaved—nothing like Sheldon. If you turned into a butterfly, you'd be a happy one! Flapping your wings, soaring free—what's more fun than that? There's no need to be afraid. Fly high and fast, and no fear can catch up to you!" 😊

Tatiana giggled. "Uncle Adam, would I really be a happy butterfly?"

"You bet!" Adam nodded. "And not just any butterfly either. The story Sheldon told you? It's not the full version. The 'Zhuangzi dreaming of a butterfly' tale is full of mythical vibes. The butterfly you'd become could fly freely, unbound by anything. It could visit countless worlds, live lives most people can't even imagine!

"Tonight, if you want to—and if you believe it—you don't have to be like Sheldon, too lazy to deal with the 'dumb Earthlings' he complains about. You could become anyone, experience an amazing, unique life. It's something others can only dream of—so why be scared?"

"Really?" Tatiana's eyes sparkled. "I can actually do that?"

"You sure can!" Adam grinned. "Your dreams are yours to control. Let go of the fear, believe in yourself, and whether it's real life or a dream, you'll be a happy butterfly. Trust me."

"I do, Uncle Adam!" Tatiana nodded hard, her eyes free of fear and brimming with excitement. She'd made up her mind: if she dreamed of being a butterfly tonight, she'd push past the fear, flap her wings like Adam said, and be a joyful butterfly soaring high.

"Remember, having extraordinary power and ability isn't a curse," Adam added as his final note. "The bigger your heart, the bigger your world. The farther your dreams, the farther you'll go. People can conquer anything."

In the West, thanks to monotheistic beliefs, people often see superhuman powers as a curse or a devil's trap—unlike in the East. You see it all over superhero comics: Spider-Man and the Hulk's miserable lives, or the X-Men, a superior race, struggling so hard they nearly go extinct. Someone gains godlike power, only to fall and become a demon. Why? Because God's the only one, supreme and untouchable—no one can be Him, let alone surpass Him. So if it's not God giving those powers, who else could it be? The devil, obviously.

Now, flip that to the East—none of that baggage there!

Chapter 702: Adam Understands the Dream of the Butterfly

Duncan Apartments.

Adam had just finished comforting Tatiana and spent some time playing with her alongside Heather before putting her to bed. 😊

Tatiana was only 4 years old.

Kids, no matter how full of energy they are during the day, always crash into a deep sleep at night. And the wilder they play, the faster and sounder they sleep. Add in Tatiana's special condition, and it made sense. Usually, she slept alone anyway, so Adam and Heather's little reunion didn't really shake things up.

They watched as Tatiana closed her eyes, her breathing settling into sleep, a faint smile tugging at her lips.

"She won't have nightmares this time, I'm sure of it," Heather said, her eyes misty as she looked at Adam. Overflowing with maternal love, she was deeply touched that Adam had stepped in to help.

"I hope she soars tonight—over mountains, rivers, the vast universe, free and unbound," Adam said with a grin. "No longer tied down by this body."

Though Tatiana had been adopted by Heather and became her only daughter, cherished by Adam, Juno, and everyone else, no amount of external love could fully erase the regret of being trapped in such a body. Despite all the affection, Adam and Juno had to remind everyone to keep a certain distance and take precautions. She was only four, but she'd already started noticing how different she was. Sweet and adorable as she was, she followed the rules without needing reminders—she took them to heart and lived by them. That quiet obedience, paired with her looks, just melted your heart. ❤️

But modern medicine couldn't cure Tatiana's condition. Even with Adam's wealth backing the best treatments, the most they could do was stretch her life to the peak expectancy for someone with her illness—still, an early death in her teens was almost certain. Adam, who also faced a shortened life, felt this deeply.

That's why he'd donated a hefty sum to AIDS research. Partly to push for a breakthrough in treatment so patients could one day be cured completely, and partly to ensure Tatiana could access cutting-edge care as soon as it existed, extending her life and improving its quality. It was a race against time, one where hope grew the longer you held on. The only difference between him and Tatiana was the limits and control—her future was uncertain, with a hard ceiling.

Today, though, something clicked for Adam. "My life has its limits, but knowledge is boundless," he thought, recalling Zhuangzi's *Dream of the Butterfly* and *Wandering in Freedom*. Didn't that open up a whole new path?

In short: Dreams have it all. 😊

It sounds like a sarcastic quip, but for Tatiana, it wasn't. What's Zhuangzi's butterfly dream? Reimagined through a certain lens, it's like an infinite multiverse adventure! If she dared to dream and wanted to, she could live a thousand different lives. And if she could grasp Zhuangzi's carefree spirit—reaching the optimism of singing while beating a basin—her body wouldn't hold her back anymore. Even getting close to that mindset would be enough.

In his past life, Adam knew countless people who lived vibrant lives alone with just a phone and Wi-Fi. Wasn't that the mind triumphing over the body? Since medical science couldn't leap forward yet, nurturing Tatiana's spirit with this butterfly dream philosophy could maximize her quality of life.

Excited, Adam shared the idea with Heather. Her face lit up—she thought it was absolutely brilliant! ✨

"Alright then, let's let Tatiana dream and roam free like a butterfly," Adam teased. "As the grown-ups, we should get familiar with this worldview and approach first, so we can guide her later..."

"Like being her wings~" Heather added, her eyes sparkling flirtatiously.

"Exactly! Her pair of wings," Adam replied with a warm smile.

As Lu Xun once said, "A short parting beats a honeymoon!" With the butterfly dream vibe in the air, that night was full of love and closeness.

As a master of time management, Adam scheduling Heather for Wednesday and Thursday wasn't random. Weekends were for studying math with Paige, starting Friday night. Paige was like an icy snow maiden stepping into the mortal world. Even after a year of Adam's tailored training, boosting her physical stats, her cool, untouchable vibe still made him hold back a little. Heather, though? No such worries there! 🤔

Among Adam's close friends, Heather topped the charts in looks and figure and had the most chemistry with him. Naturally durable and honed by four years of Adam's relentless "training," her "combat power" was off the charts. If Paige was a 1, Heather could take on 10 Paiges now. Emmm... MAX, the sharp-tongued jokester, held a solid second place at 5 Paiges. Kate, the pro cop, clocked in at 4. Poor Paige, stuck as the unit of measure—Adam made sure to slot Heather's overwhelming "power" before her to shield her a bit.

It was like how robotics genius Howard separated his robot girlfriend from his robot reporter in his designs—some things just didn't mix. Not that Adam was a creep like Howard! He and Heather had real feelings. Still, with her top-tier looks, figure, "combat strength," and unmatched closeness with Adam, Heather was a gift from above. 🙏

"The great bird rises with the wind, soaring ninety thousand miles!" Adam worked hard to teach Heather the essence of Wandering in Freedom. Though Eastern culture was famously tough to grasp, years of Adam's guidance had given her a solid foundation. This time, it paid off big—they soared together, free as the clouds.

"Got plans tomorrow?" Adam asked casually.

"I'm meeting Megan's mom," Heather murmured, hugging his arm with her eyes closed. "We're taking Tatiana and Megan on a cruise to see the sea. What do you think?"

"Sounds good," Adam said, opening his eyes and thinking it over. "Just be careful."

"Don't worry," Heather laughed. "We're just cruising around New York's waters—there and back in a day, nothing far."

"Cool," Adam nodded. "Still, bring a satellite phone, just in case."

"Got it," Heather said, feeling his care and squeezing his arm tighter.

"Easy there," Adam chuckled.

"I'm not doing anything~" Heather giggled.

"Heh," Adam grinned, meeting her teary, bright blue eyes. Inspiration struck, and he recited:

"The zither's fifty strings hum without cause, each note a memory of fleeting years.

Zhuangzi dreams of butterflies in dawn's light, the emperor's spring heart rides a cuckoo's call.

The moon gleams over the sea, pearls weep; the sun warms Lantian, jade smokes rise.

This feeling lingers for memory's sake—back then, it was already lost in a haze."

Chapter 703: From Life to Death, Never Apart

The night passed peacefully. Tatiana didn't wake up from any nightmares. 😊

The next day, Adam was happily woken up by Heather and drove off to the medical center.

"Cristina, let's go," Adam said, waving at her after changing into his scrubs.

"Do I really need to come?" Cristina grumbled, clearly not thrilled.

"You don't have to," Adam replied, giving her a look. "But then don't whine next time when I'm assisting Dr. Montgomery with surgery and you're all jealous about it! Plus, we're about to become official residents soon, and your rotation record? It's the worst. You've basically camped out in cardiothoracic surgery. You sure you don't want to brush up on other departments?"

"Okay, fine—but tell me, is this patient actually getting major surgery?" Cristina asked, staring him down. "I'm not wasting my time on some basic gyno case."

"Up to you," Adam said with a sly grin. "I've given you the chance." Then he turned and walked off.

"Ugh, fine, I'm coming!" Cristina gritted her teeth and hurried after him.

"What changed your mind?" Adam asked, glancing at her as she caught up.

"Because I realized how dumb I was being," Cristina said with a self-deprecating laugh. "Who's Dr. Montgomery? And who are you? If it's not a big case, why would you two be involved?"

"You're finally catching on," Adam chuckled.

"So, who's the patient this time?" Cristina pressed.

"You'll see when we get there," Adam said, picking up the pace.

In the Hospital Room

A young blonde woman in a hospital gown lay on the bed. Beside her stood another girl in a red hoodie, keeping her company—the vibe between them screaming sisterly love. When Adam walked in and saw this, he froze for a second. Couldn't help it. The scene, that red hoodie—it hit him right in the feels.

Cristina noticed Adam's little smirk and gave him a sideways glance. But when she saw the patient and her friend starting to look at them funny, she tugged Adam's sleeve and took the lead.

"Hi, I'm Dr. Yang, and this is Dr. Duncan," Cristina said, introducing them as she grabbed the chart from the bedside. "Jilly, have you been having pain and bleeding?"

"For a few weeks now," the red-hoodie girl answered for her. "It's probably no big deal, but I still dragged her here." She smiled at Jilly on the bed. "Don't worry, I took the day off from the restaurant. We're getting you checked out properly today."

Adam quietly marveled to himself. So similar! Whenever Juno and Karen were together, Juno was the one doing all the talking too. Karen? Silent blonde beauty, just like this.

"Do we really need this many doctors?" the red-hoodie girl asked, eyeing Adam. "Especially a guy, for Jilly's cervical cancer check?"

"Hello, I'm Dr. Montgomery, Jilly's attending," Dr. Montgomery said, walking in just in time to overhear. "It's not a cervical cancer check—it's a pelvic exam. This is a teaching hospital, so I have interns assist. Dr. Duncan and Dr. Yang are our best interns. If that makes you uncomfortable—"

"No, it's fine," Jilly said with a small smile, finally speaking up. "I'm helping you learn, right?"

"Exactly," Adam said, shaking off his thoughts and nodding at her with a warm smile.

"Cool," Jilly said, tugging at the obviously annoyed red-hoodie girl. "Rachel, it's okay."

"Fine," Rachel muttered, placing her hand over Jilly's, reluctantly agreeing.

Adam couldn't help but think to himself, That's backwards. It's usually Juno calming down Karen, who's got a thing against guys. Still, he kept his cool, staying professional. If these two didn't remind him so much of Juno and Karen, he wouldn't have slipped even for a second.

"Dr. Yang, you're up," Dr. Montgomery said, stepping aside to let Cristina take over.

"Alright," Cristina said, a bit thrown off but stepping up anyway. She slipped on gloves and turned to Jilly. "I'll warm up the speculum so it's more comfortable. If you can relax your knees a bit, that'd help."

Jilly took a deep breath, nodded, and glanced at Rachel. "You don't have to stay here..."

"Are you kidding? Of course I'm staying!" Rachel interrupted, grabbing Jilly's hand. "We do everything together—this isn't any different. Remember our promise?"

"From life to death, never apart," Jilly said, finishing the line with Rachel as they squeezed each other's hands.

"Oh, so you two are..." Cristina started, her eyes widening in realization.

"No," Jilly said, shaking her head with a laugh. "Rachel and I were born on the same day, same moment. We've been together since birth—best sisters ever."

"Got it," Cristina said neutrally. "Okay, I'm starting the exam. Relax your muscles, and you'll feel the speculum..."

She stopped mid-sentence, looking up at Dr. Montgomery and Adam with a serious expression.

"What's wrong?" Dr. Montgomery asked, confused. "If you can't find the cervix, angle the speculum downward."

Cristina stepped back, gesturing for her to look.

Dr. Montgomery peered in, and her face turned grim instantly.

"Okay, Jilly..." she began, about to end the exam.

"Wait," Jilly said, taking a shaky breath to stay calm. "He hasn't seen yet. You said it's a teaching hospital—he needs to see to learn, right?"

"Dr. Duncan," Dr. Montgomery said, stepping aside.

Adam took a look and sighed inwardly. He caught the complicated look on Jilly's face and realized she might've already suspected her condition. Made sense—how could she not know, feeling like this?

"What's going on?" Rachel demanded. "Oh my God, Jilly, are you pregnant?"

"No, I'm not," Jilly said, shaking her head. Then, with a flicker of hope, she looked at Adam and the others. "Right?"

"No," Dr. Montgomery said after a pause, shaking her head.

Adam and Cristina exchanged a glance. They could tell Jilly might've preferred hearing she was pregnant over what was really happening. For now, they'd need more detailed tests. Dr. Montgomery gave a few instructions and left Jilly in Adam and Cristina's hands.

In the CT Room

"Now I believe they're just pure sisterly soulmates," Cristina said with a sigh. "Otherwise, how could Rachel not notice that massive cervical tumor? I've never seen one that big."

"Yeah," Adam agreed. "They're really something special."

During the exam, thanks to their uncanny resemblance to Juno and Karen, Adam had been quietly watching their every move. He could feel the deep sisterly bond in their subtle expressions—no hint of anything romantic, no impurities, just the purest, most genuine connection. Not blood sisters, but closer than that. Their "from life to death" pact? It hit hard. This was the best kind of family—nothing like those fake, backstabbing "sisters" out there.

Chapter 704: The Third Little Red Riding Hood

Medical Center.

After Adam and Christina finished running a CT scan for Gilly, they stepped out only to be intercepted by Rachel.

"Gilly has cancer?" The girl in red, Rachel, clapped a hand over her mouth, struggling to keep her emotions in check.

"We'll need a few more hours for the biopsy results," Adam said gently.

"If she does have cancer, you have to tell me first," Rachel said, fighting back tears. "Because if you break the news in front of her, I'll cry. And if I cry, she'll cry too. I don't want that."

"You should brace yourself," Adam warned. "With symptoms this obvious, I think Gilly already knows something's up. Crying together might not be the worst thing—it's better than bottling it all up."

Rachel paused, glancing at Adam before nodding. "Maybe you're right... No wonder Gilly's been acting off. Normally, even if you're a doctor, she'd never let you check her for something like this, let alone stick with it..." Her voice broke as she turned away, covering her mouth and sobbing quietly. "She must've known already and wanted to do something different, something meaningful. That's why she's changed so much."

Adam and Christina exchanged a quiet look, saying nothing.

If it were just early-stage cervical cancer with no spread, they could remove the uterus, excise the tumor, and pair it with chemo later—Gilly could live for years. But the scans showed the cancer had already spread. How far? Surgery would tell. The CT alone, though, painted a grim picture.

"Does she have any family we should contact?" Adam asked.

"She has parents..." Rachel wiped her tears, choking out, "But we ran away from home at 16. Haven't been back since, no contact at all."

"Why?" Christina couldn't help but ask.

"It's complicated," Rachel shook her head. "Point is, we're not reaching out to them. Don't you dare either. I'm her family now—she's mine too, the only one I've got!"

"We'll respect your wishes," Adam said evenly.

She might be right in her heart, but legally, she wasn't family—no rights there. Still, Adam and Christina would leave it at that; whether Gilly's actual family got involved was up to them.

"I hear chemo comes after surgery like this," Rachel said, drying her eyes with a determined look. "I'm calling the restaurant now—switching my day shifts to nights so I can drive Gilly to her treatments every day." She pulled out her phone, stepping aside to make the call.

Day shift versus night shift? Anyone would get the difference. Especially for a young woman whose youth was fleeting, making that choice wasn't easy. 😊

As Zhou Shuren once said, "Judge people by their actions, not their hearts." But when you meet someone whose actions and heart align like this, what's left to say? You cherish them.

Adam and Christina were both curious about what these two sisters-in-arms had been through. But it was private—best not to pry.

Not long after, though, they got their answer.

An elderly couple in plain black clothes showed up at the hospital, looking uneasy. Adam clocked them instantly—not ordinary folks, but devout Mennonites. These believers stuck to a uniform black dress code, lived in tight-knit farming communes, and held ultra-conservative views, treating the Bible as the ultimate guide. No cars—just horse-drawn carriages. No electric lights either. One glimpse told the whole story: they were starkly out of place in the modern world.

"We're looking for Gilly Anmiller," the wife said, her face etched with worry.

"You're Gilly's parents?" Adam realized.

The Mennonites were a branch of Protestant Christianity, but unlike those baptized as clueless kids, this group prized free choice and steadfast faith. Kids in their communities only decided whether to get baptized as adults. No surprise there—living that primitive farming life demanded unshakable devotion. Baptism day was huge: accept it, and you're in the community for good; reject it, and you're cast out. Literally. Exiles couldn't return, and no one—not even their parents—could contact them. No talking, no eye contact. To the community, they were dead.

Gilly and Rachel had come from that world. No wonder they'd cut ties completely after running away.

"Follow me," Adam said, leading the couple to Gilly's room.

Just outside, they heard Rachel chattering away, reassuring Gilly about their plans: "Don't worry, don't be scared—I've got you. I'll be with you the whole time."

"Mom? Dad?" Gilly had been smiling faintly as she listened, a shadow of gloom in her eyes, until Adam brought the couple to the doorway. Her face lit up, and she couldn't help but call out.

"How'd you get here?" Rachel whipped around, her expression darkening as she glared at Adam. "Did you call them?"

"No," Adam clarified. "You just got admitted. Even if we'd notified them, they wouldn't be here this fast."

"It's okay, Little Ray," Gilly said, trying to calm her despite her own excitement.

"No!" Rachel snapped. "They want to take you back. Have you forgotten why we left? Do you really want to go back to that disgusting place?"

Gilly and Rachel locked eyes, caught in a painful standoff. It was obvious now—Gilly must've called her parents herself. How else could they have shown up so quickly? And for them to get here that fast, they'd have had to fly—a massive leap for people like them, proof of how much they loved her.

"They're puppets chained by faith," Rachel said, her voice heavy with worry and sorrow. "Some of them turn into monsters at any moment. I don't trust them. Your parents just played deaf and blind when the devils came—they couldn't protect you. We barely escaped. Do you want to face that danger again? I rejected baptism—I can't go back. If you do, I won't be able to stay with you or protect you anymore."

"Mom, Dad..." Gilly looked at Rachel, then at her mother's loving face and her father's feigned indifference masking real concern. After a long, torn moment, she said hoarsely, "You should go."

In the end, she chose Rachel. They'd promised to stick together, from life to death. If Gilly left, Rachel would be alone—out in the world, worrying about her back in that community. How could she bear that?

"But you're about to have surgery," her mother blurted out. With Rachel—an outcast—there, she'd held back from speaking or even looking at Gilly too much, but this broke her restraint.

"I know," Gilly said, her voice rough. "But you coming here was a mistake... It's making this harder for me..."

Her parents left the room, defeated.

From their words, though, Adam pieced together a lot. His gaze softened as he looked at Rachel. If he wasn't mistaken, she might just be another fierce, brave Little Red Riding Hood. She'd once saved and protected Gilly, and their shared struggles had forged a bond so deep that even now, with her parents in the picture, Gilly still chose her.

Chapter 705: Someone's About to Make Big News

At the Medical Center

Adam and Cristina were helping Jilly with her pre-op prep.

"Want your parents to come by?" Cristina asked, unable to hold back.

"They're still around?" Jilly's eyes lit up, a faint smile tugging at her lips.

"They're praying for you," Cristina said. "Is that whole exile thing really that strict?"

"Yeah," Jilly replied, her smile fading. "It's our faith."

"Our' faith?" Adam caught the shift in her tone. "So you still believe—and you're leaning toward going back?"

"My body..." Jilly hesitated. "A while back, I went to the ER. The doctor there told me to see an oncologist. But we were working three jobs just to scrape by for rent and basics—no way could we afford treatment. Then these past couple days, I got scared..."

Adam got it. Two girls who ran away from home at 16? Forget college—they barely made it through high school. Growing up in a Mennonite community, stuck in a primitive farming life, even a middle school education was a stretch. What kind of jobs could they land?

Sell their bodies or sell their sweat.

Both girls were pretty—especially Jilly. If they wanted, they could've made quick cash, big cash even. But they weren't like that. They chose the hard road—waitressing, juggling three jobs each to survive. Problem was, that kept them trapped at the bottom. Every penny went to bills, barely getting by, no savings. One hiccup, and they'd be helpless, just lying there waiting to die.

When Jilly saw the ER doc and realized she probably had cancer, her first thought was despair. Why bother treating it? She didn't want to drag Rachel, the sister who loved her most, down with her. Sickness could bankrupt them—and for them, it'd be poverty on top of poverty. If Rachel found out, she'd never give up on her. What then? Either burn through Rachel's future or shatter her dignity. Neither was something Jilly could stomach.

And even if they tried, there was no guarantee it'd work. If Jilly died, what would happen to Rachel—stripped of pride and prospects? How would she go on?

Sure, they'd promised "from life to death." But that didn't mean dying together. If Jilly had to go, she wanted Rachel to live on strong, carrying her memory, living the vibrant life Jilly wouldn't get to.

"So you called your parents," Cristina said, piecing it together.

"I didn't know what else to do," Jilly said, looking down. "These past few days, I've been thinking a lot. That place—it's still my home. If I die, I want a Mennonite funeral." She looked up, a hopeful smile breaking through. "I want to be buried in a white dress. I want everyone there—Rachel, my parents."

Adam and Cristina exchanged a glance. That's the power of religion for you. Fear of death births faith. Jilly might've scoffed at it once, ditching it all to run off with Rachel. But now, facing death, those childhood seeds of belief were sprouting fast.

In the Operating Room

Dr. Montgomery was leading the surgery, with Adam as first assist and Cristina as second. Out of nowhere, Dr. Bailey barged in, planting herself to watch like a boss.

"How'd Jilly end up like this? Depressing, right?" Bailey kicked off the convo.

Adam couldn't help but grin. He knew what she was getting at.

"If we'd caught it earlier, this could've been prevented and treated," Bailey said, throwing a pointed look at Dr. Montgomery, who was focused on the surgery and staying quiet.

"But you've gotta catch it early," Adam chimed in. "Right, Dr. Montgomery?"

"Yeah," Dr. Montgomery said, finally looking up with a无奈 sigh at Bailey. "Anything else you want to say, Dr. Bailey?"

"You bet," Bailey replied, tossing Adam a grateful nod before turning serious. "I want to open a free clinic—so people like Jilly can get yearly checkups, catch cancer early. That's the difference between life and death, isn't it?"

"Prevention, early detection—fewer tragedies in the world," Adam added casually.

"Exactly!" Bailey jumped in. "I need support—support from all the department heads. Dr. Montgomery, you're head of neonatal—will you back me?"

"It's complicated," Dr. Montgomery said, shaking her head. "Funding, coordination, all that jazz. Plus, we're surgeons. You think the chief will go for it?"

Hospitals don't usually do outpatient stuff—that's for community or family docs.

"I know," Bailey shot back without missing a beat. "I've done the groundwork and I'm ready to tackle every hurdle. The chief hasn't said no. If you all back me, I can do this—I will do this!"

"But why?" Cristina asked, confused. "You're a surgeon."

"Because I want to do more!" Bailey said, her voice rising. "I need something to lean on, a reason to believe medicine isn't just stitching people up and sending them off. I need to believe it saves lives and changes them. I need to know I'm doing the right thing!"

Adam watched Bailey, all fired up, and felt a wave of respect. Docs like her? They're why people look up to this job. He didn't mind lending a hand. With a little smile, he channeled some big-shot energy: "Funding's not an issue."

"Thanks, Adam!" Bailey beamed. That wasn't just about money—it was Adam throwing his full weight behind her. With his influence, the surgical chief and other department heads would take her seriously, not just brush her off. One sentence from him, and her brewing big plan was 70% in the bag.

"Alright," Dr. Montgomery said, not about to go against both Bailey and Adam. All she had to do was say yes anyway.

"Thank you, Dr. Montgomery!" Bailey said, over the moon.

"Can we focus on the surgery now?" Dr. Montgomery teased.

"Maybe not," Adam said with a sigh.

Everyone followed his gaze and got it.

"The cervical cancer's spread to the entire bladder. Stage four. No point in continuing—let's close her up."

Chapter 706: I'd Flatten Hell for You

Medical Center.

Outside the Operating Room.

Rachel, the girl in red, paced anxiously. Not far off, Gilly's parents murmured prayers under their breath.

"That was fast!" Rachel jolted when Dr. Montgomery stepped out. "How's Gilly?"

"I'm sorry," Dr. Montgomery said, his voice heavy with regret. "Gilly's tumor has spread to her bladder. It's stage four—surgery's no longer an option."

"W-What does that mean?" Rachel asked, pale as if struck by lightning.

Dr. Montgomery glanced at Gilly's parents, who were watching desperately from a distance. "Her parents are still here. Taking her home might be the best choice."

"No!!!" Rachel's voice cracked, rejecting the idea outright.

Gilly's mom, watching the scene, pieced it together. Her prayers faltered, tears streaming down her face. Gilly's proud dad closed his eyes, his trembling frame betraying his pain.

Dr. Montgomery offered a few more explanations, but seeing Rachel collapse to the floor, sobbing into her hands, he shook his head and walked away. This kind of grief was for families to bear alone. Unless a miracle struck—unless those rampant cancer cells met a fiercer foe and just gave up—Rachel's best friend, the devout couple's daughter, didn't have much time left.

Adam finished stitching up and wrapping things up in the OR before stepping out.

"How's Gilly?" Rachel asked, wiping her tears. Her tone was calmer now. "When can I see her?"

"Soon," Adam said, pausing as he met her gaze. "She wants to go home."

"I know," Rachel nodded numbly.

"If you need it, I can introduce you to a friend of mine—someone amazing," Adam offered cautiously. "'Home is where the heart finds peace.' If she can help Gilly see that, and convince her parents too, you could all be with her till the end."

"Impossible," Rachel shook her head. "No one can pull that off."

"How do you know if you don't try?" Adam pressed. "This friend of mine—she's really persuasive."

"Why help us?" Rachel's eyes narrowed, wary.

"Because you remind me of her," Adam said, meeting her gaze with honesty. "Right now, Gilly's got two paths: stay and honor your pact—together from life to death—or go back with her parents, get baptized, and lose you forever. But I'm betting you'd let her go, even if it meant you'd suffer alone, unable to see her or be there at the end. Either way, it's a regret. I don't want someone like my friend to carry that kind of weight."

"How do you know I'd choose that?" Rachel's guard softened.

"Because you love her. You're real sisters," Adam sighed. "And she's already made her choice, hasn't she?"

"Can it really work?" Rachel's voice trembled after a long silence.

"There's a good chance," Adam said seriously. "If anyone in the world can do it, it's my friend Juno. She's the one."

"Thank you," Rachel said, gratitude softening her tone.

"No problem," Adam grinned. "Spreading truth, goodness, and beauty? That's my thing. I'll call Juno now—she's an intern at Mass General in Boston. She'll be here quick."

He dialed Juno, gave her the rundown, and hung up. "She's on her way."

"I'll go sit with Gilly," Rachel said, a faint smile breaking through as she headed to the room.

Inside the Ward.

"Hey," Gilly said, opening her eyes to see Rachel forcing a smile.

"Dr. Duncan's hooking us up with a friend," Rachel said, brightening up. "She's supposed to be super convincing. If she can sway your parents, we'll all stay with you. If not... you go home."

"Little Ray..." Gilly didn't know what to say.

It's what she wanted, but hearing it hurt too much.

"They're your parents," Rachel said, lips tight but smiling through it. "You love them, and they're still here. You know what flying here means for them... If it comes to that, go home. You're in this state—I doubt any devil would dare hurt you now. But if one does..." She turned, glaring at Gilly's parents by the door. "I swear I'll slaughter every demon and flatten hell for you. Tell the community that—say it's from me!"

Gilly's dad averted his eyes. Her mom, though, couldn't hold back. Breaking doctrine, she nodded and spoke. "I will, Rachel. You're a good girl. I'll tell your parents I saw you—that you're doing well, happy, and still the amazing girl you've always been."

Gilly's stiff dad stood silent, pretending not to see or hear. In that moment, human kindness trumped rigid faith. ✨

"But I can't leave you here," Gilly said, clutching Rachel's hand, her voice breaking.

"No, you can!" Rachel fought her tears, her tone firm. "You can go home, put on your bonnet, ride a carriage, get baptized in church, and leave this world as a Mennonite."

"No, I can't!" Gilly sobbed, unable to hold it in.

"Why not?" Rachel laughed through her tears. "Because you'd have to avoid me? Don't worry—you can't. I'm right here," she said, pointing to Gilly's heart, then her own. "And you're in mine. As long as we hold onto each other, our promise stands: from life to death, never apart."

"Wahhh..." Gilly burst into tears.

"Don't cry," Rachel said, pulling her into a hug with a shaky laugh. "When you're home, I'll snag your curling iron. No more fighting over the TV—your DVD stash is all mine. I'll think of you every day and live happily in the 21st century."

"Heh... heh..." Gilly giggled through her sobs.

"Hey! It's not set yet," Rachel teased. "If Dr. Duncan's friend convinces your parents, no bonnet, white dress, or carriage for you!"

"I just want you and Mom and Dad," Gilly choked out. "That's all I need!"

"Then let's hope," Rachel smiled. "If God's real, He'll make the right call. Say hi to your parents now."

She let go, stepping aside to the doorway, giving Gilly's parents the floor.

"Hi~" Gilly beamed through her tears as they approached, her smile radiant.

To reunite with her loving parents at life's end—what a gift.

"Hi, Gilly," her mom said, overjoyed, grasping her daughter's hands and kissing them softly.

Gilly's other hand reached for her dad instinctively. "Gilly," he said, still proud as ever, standing tall. He didn't bend to kiss her hand, but he gripped it tight, unwilling to let go.

"Don't worry," Adam said from outside, glancing at Rachel, who stood alone by the door, teary-eyed. "God'll make the right choice."

Chapter 707: The Ultimate Little Red Riding Hood

Medical Center

Rachel, who had been on the verge of tears and ready to leave, was stopped outside the building by Adam.

She knew how strict the religious doctrines were and didn't hold much hope that one of Adam's friends could convince Jilly's parents. The scene of a family reunion only solidified her resolve to let go completely.

"Just wait a little longer," Adam urged. "Isn't it worth sticking around for an hour if it means you could be there for Jilly's final moments?"

"It's worth it," Rachel nodded quietly. "I just don't want to stay there and ruin their father-daughter reunion."

Hmmm...

The biggest hurdle here wasn't Jilly's parents as a pair—it was Jilly's proud, old-fashioned father. Her mother had already bent the rules once before. But talking to an "exiled one" like Rachel—someone

unseen and unspeakable—was nowhere near the same as letting Rachel return to the community, stay by Jilly's side until the end, and then attend her baptism and Mennonite funeral. That was a whole different ballgame.

Even Jilly's mother, with all her boundless maternal love, probably couldn't pull that off. It wasn't that she didn't want to—she couldn't.

An hour or so later, Adam greeted Juno and her inseparable sidekick Karen as they arrived outside the building.

"You two..." Adam couldn't help but chuckle at the sight of Juno and Karen decked out in bright red hooded sweatshirts. 😊

"Alright, let's get down to business," Juno said with a grin. "I'm dying to meet this Rachel you say is so much like me."

"Not that much," Adam shook his head. "Maybe a third alike. She doesn't have your sharp wit or your chill optimism."

"That's 'cause she didn't have a wise friend like me growing up," Juno teased. "If she'd had someone like that in her teenage years, maybe she'd be more like me."

"...I feel like you're throwing shade," Adam said, his lip twitching. "And I've got proof!"

He glanced at Karen, who was frowning and looking distinctly unhappy. Clearly, this "wise friend" wasn't her—because even if it was shade, Karen would've still wanted to be included. But back in high school, Juno's only real friend had been Adam.

And back then, Adam had been turned into a total drama queen by his ex, Magical Amy. That acting chops? Pretty clever, sure. But it only worked on someone like Amy, a hard-working overachiever still figuring herself out. Against a natural genius like Juno? Nope, zero effect.

As for Juno's teasing—claiming it wasn't about his acting but about Adam's "real wisdom"? Oh, come on! Back then, Adam had just crossed over into this world. His smarts hadn't had time to level up. He barely hit the "genius" benchmark—how could he be the "wise friend" of an already brilliant Juno?

"You know I'm not mocking you," Juno laughed. "Okay, maybe a tiny bit of teasing, but definitely not mockery. Back in high school, your IQ wasn't what it is now, but trust me, you were still wise. You were my wise friend. Without the you from back then, I wouldn't be who I am today. I've thought about it, and I like this version of me better."

"Fine, insufficient evidence—case dismissed," Adam said, a grin tugging at his lips. "I like this version of you too."

Juno was a mix of Juno (the pregnant teen) and Hayley from Little Red Riding Hood. In a normal timeline, she'd start as Hayley, turn into Juno the teen mom, and probably end up back as Hayley—a Big Bad Wolf's worst nightmare, an ultimate bloodthirsty Little Red Riding Hood.

Hmmm...

Beauty's deception + Senior Brother's steadiness + Dexter's "punish evil to uphold good" vibe + Sherlock's razor-sharp intellect - Dexter's uncontrollable chaos - Sherlock's "can't rest 'til the case is solved" obsession = Ultimate Little Red Riding Hood. This version of her would make a perfect dark knight anti-hero.

But the Juno standing here now? She'd mellowed out a lot. Honestly, that was thanks to Adam's influence.

For one, she had real friends now and wasn't so lonely inside. For another, she'd followed Adam's lead, studied medicine, and became a doctor. Saving lives didn't extend her lifespan like it did for Adam, but it gave her an outlet—slicing here and there when she needed to, keeping her urge to take down the "Big Bad Wolves" in check.

Crunch. Crunch.

Karen shot Adam a sideways glare, her fists clenching with little popping sounds, totally wrecking the warm moment between him and Juno. Here we go again—she was mad! 🙄 Not happy at all!

"Let's go," Juno said, grabbing Karen's hand and instantly calming her down. She flashed Adam a smile. "Time to meet this Rachel who's supposedly a third like me. I wanna see what she's all about."

Adam led the way.

"Rachel, meet my best friend, Juno, and her ride-or-die, Karen," Adam said, making the intros. "Juno, this is Rachel."

"Hey, Rachel!" Juno greeted her with a warm smile.

"Hi, Juno. Hi, Karen," Rachel replied, eyeing their matching red hoodies. Juno's infectious grin instantly won her over.

"Adam, why don't you head off for a bit?" Juno suggested, glancing at him. "I'll chat with Rachel first."

"Got it," Adam nodded at Rachel and walked off.

Soul-touching heart-to-hearts were Juno's specialty. But how fast she could get there depended on the person and the setting. Adam sticking around would only slow things down.

As he stepped into the hospital building, Adam glanced back at the three women now sitting together outside. Juno was in the middle on a bench, Karen on her left, Rachel on her right. Juno turned to talk to Rachel, who tried to hold it together but soon gave in, tearfully pouring her heart out. Juno put an arm around her, pulling her into a half-hug. On the left, Karen pouted, her face turned to the side.

All three in their red hoodies looked like a trio of Little Red Riding Hoods. Adam smiled and turned away.

He hoped Juno could help Rachel and Jilly resolve their regrets. He trusted Juno's skills, but even then, he wasn't 100% sure she could overcome someone's faith in such a short time. So, bringing Juno here

was partly a long shot—and partly just to let Rachel meet her and Karen. If Rachel could earn Juno's approval and they became friends, then even if Rachel had to leave her sister behind in tears, she'd have some emotional support.

Yup! Even though Adam was touched by Rachel and Jilly's sisterly bond and saw that hint of Juno in Rachel, he wouldn't push Juno and Karen to accept her without Juno's okay. That "third alike" thing could go either way—good or bad. Adam wasn't about to plant a ticking time bomb for Juno and Karen. Because if he did, it'd be like planting one for himself. If something ever happened to them, could he really just stand by?

Emergency Room

A group of interns gathered for triage training—one of the most critical skills a doctor needs. In emergencies, you've got just one minute to make a call. Often, that snap decision determines whether a patient lives or dies.

Hmmm...

For Christina and the others, this was a must-pass part of their surgical exams. Everyone took it seriously.

Chapter 708: All Kinds of Drama

Medical Center. Emergency Room.

A row of intern doctors stood lined up, ready to go.

"Grey, you're up first!"

Dr. Bailey, clipboard in hand, tilted her head toward Meredith.

In the middle of the room, a doctor lay on a bed, face covered, pretending to be a patient.

Meredith stepped forward, checked quickly, and gave her call: "The hand's super swollen, but the pulse at the end is steady. I'd rule out compartment syndrome."

Dr. Bailey stared at her, expressionless, motioning for her to keep going.

"...I think it's probably a radius fracture," Meredith continued, pushing on. "We'd splint it first, then send them to ortho for follow-up. If everything checks out, they can head home."

"Anything else?" Dr. Bailey asked.

"Anything else?" Meredith froze, suddenly flustered, her eyes darting to Adam instinctively.

"No peeking at Duncan!" Dr. Bailey snapped, then scanned the group of interns. "And the rest of you—don't you dare look to Duncan for help either. This is a test! You've got to make accurate calls on your own, or what's the point of having you here?"

She paused, her gaze landing on Adam. Her stern look softened into a little smile. "Adam, don't help them either. Helping them now is just hurting them in the long run."

"I know, Dr. Bailey," Adam said with a grin and a nod.

"Mhm." Dr. Bailey smirked, clearly pleased, then turned back to Meredith, her face blank again. "Grey, anything else to add?"

The other interns' mouths were practically twitching in unison.

Is this still the same Dr. Bailey we know—the one who's all about tough love?

Where'd the old Bailey go, the one who used to give Adam Duncan the cold shoulder?

All this over a free clinic?

Just because Adam helped her snag some funding?

Come on, you're a surgeon—is this really necessary?

The interns never imagined they'd see this side of Dr. Bailey. But then they exchanged glances and shrugged it off.

This was Adam Duncan we're talking about—kind, brilliant, overflowing with talent, and ridiculously charming. No one could resist him. They should've seen this coming! 😊

"Nope," Meredith said, her mind blank. That was her full diagnosis—she had no clue what else to add. Plus, she wasn't sure if Dr. Bailey was bluffing her. These tests were all about training their decision-making skills. For all she knew, she might've nailed it already.

"Alright, I was about to say—" Dr. Bailey started, but she got cut off.

"Time's up!"

Callie, George's girlfriend and an ortho resident, strolled over, stopwatch in hand, calling it.

"I'm dead!"

Then Sydney, the doctor playing the patient, popped up from the bed, ruining Dr. Bailey's big reveal moment.

Adam flashed a knowing grin. Sydney was his resident, and she was a total sweetheart—playful, too. She'd jumped in because she'd been clashing with Dr. Bailey lately.

Just a few days ago, the hospital's chief resident got promoted to attending, leaving the chief resident spot wide open. Surgical Chief Richard was looking for someone to step up.

The gig—overseeing all the residents and basically being half a surgical chief—only had a few qualified contenders: the top senior residents with killer skills and reputations. Dr. Bailey, Sydney, and Callie from ortho.

And wouldn't you know it, those three just happened to be the ones running today's intern training.

Dr. Bailey was the obvious frontrunner. Sydney was second in line. Callie, ortho's finest, was third.

Dr. Bailey was all in on prepping the free clinic lately, so she wasn't super gung-ho about the chief resident gig.

Ehhh, okay, not SUPER, but she wasn't totally uninterested either. If it came her way, she'd take it without hesitation. She'd already been assisting the old chief resident for ages—her rep even spread across the New York medical scene. Visiting attendings would straight-up ask for "the Nazi" from the medical center because everyone knew she was the best resident around. She made their surgeries smoother than butter.

Sydney, sitting pretty in second place, was fired up and ready to fight for it. Sure, she was all giggles and "love heals" vibes, but her skills and ethics? Top-tier.

When Dr. Bailey took maternity leave once, Sydney stepped in to manage Cristina and the crew. She even went toe-to-toe with Dr. Burke—big-shot attending and surgical chief candidate—when he tried sticking up for Cristina. Sydney shut him down so hard he walked away speechless, finally getting why dating an intern was a bad idea.

That kind of guts and principle? Only Dr. Bailey and Sydney had it.

So now, trailing a bit behind, Sydney was throwing little challenges at Dr. Bailey—adding some extra drama whenever she could. It was driving Bailey nuts! 😊

"Dead?" Meredith blinked, stunned.

Sydney, ever the jokester, went full ham—crooked mouth, rolling eyes, shaking all over—then flopped back on the bed, "dying" with her head lolled to the side.

"Duncan!" Dr. Bailey barked, calling Adam in.

"The bone's broken through the skin," Adam said calmly. "She's got multiple wounds and scrapes. Unless there's some hidden condition, a penetrating injury like that's an open fracture. If it's not caught and treated fast, the wound could fester—worst case, it could kill the patient."

"That's it?" Meredith gaped. "That's such a long shot!"

"But it's possible, right?" Adam countered. "As doctors, we've got to think of everything and rule out the wild cards. If we don't, and something goes wrong with our patient, we'll regret it forever."

"Exactly!" Dr. Bailey jumped in. "That's the whole point of this drill. When time's tight and you're triaging on instinct, you've got to be thorough. Don't let your eyes trick you—any tiny doubt that flashes by, chase it down. Otherwise, you could end up with a patient dying for no reason at all."

Click!

A camera shutter snapped, pulling everyone's attention.

"Sorry, just documenting!" George said, all serious, holding up his camera. He'd been snapping pics of Callie, the ortho resident.

Adam, Cristina, and Meredith traded looks, their eyes screaming shock and amusement.

Since when did George, the soft little wimp, get this bold?

Callie marched over, mortified, whispering, "We're working here—I'm your boss..."

"I know, my heart's boss~" George purred, his cheesy line echoing for all to hear.

Callie's scalp tingled with embarrassment as she glared at him. "You can't undermine my authority in front of the interns and my colleagues!"

"O'Malley, put that down!" Dr. Bailey said coolly, and George obeyed instantly, no questions asked.

Callie dropped her head, avoiding everyone's eyes. She'd been third in line for chief resident and still wanted to fight for it—but after this? Yeah, good luck with that.

Chapter 709: Cruise Ship Accident

Medical Center – Emergency Room

"Next!" Dr. Bailey announced. "Yang, you're up!"

"Got it," Christina replied, practically buzzing with excitement.

"Hold up, everyone," the Chief of Surgery, Richard, interrupted as he strode in, his face grim. "We just got word of a mass casualty incident. All trauma centers are on high alert, and I need to send a medical team out immediately."

"Is this part of the test?" Christina asked, her mind jumping to a simulation scenario. "Do I need to fake a worried face or something?"

Exams? No problem. But this touchy-feely doctor stuff? That's where she was screwed. She had zero emotions—none of the nerves, none of the pity. Honestly, she kind of wanted to laugh.

"Chief, what kind of incident?" Adam asked, his eyes narrowing.

"No clue. I just got the order—details are still fuzzy," Richard shook his head at Adam before turning to Christina. "Dr. Yang, this isn't a test or a drill. It's an emergency. I need everyone ready to roll!"

He scanned the room and barked, "Dr. Bailey, you're leading the team. Adam, you're going too!"

"Yes, sir," they replied. In moments like this, you just follow orders.

"Yang, Grey, O'Malley—grab the trauma kits! Remember your triage training; you're about to use it for real," Bailey instructed after Richard left. "What are you standing around for? Move! Move! Move!"

"I'll grab mine too," Adam said to Bailey before jogging off to his office.

He kept everything on hand—tight-fitting Duncan surgical gear, even a spacesuit—so a trauma kit? Child's play. Unlike Christina and the others scrambling to pack theirs, Adam had his All-Purpose Duncan Trauma Kit ready to go. All he had to do was grab it and head out.

But his mind wasn't on the kit. As he ran, he made a call and quickly got the scoop on this "mass casualty incident" the Chief didn't even know about yet. "Damn it!" he muttered under his breath.

In his office, kit in hand, he dialed Heather's satellite phone. "Heather, you guys okay?" he asked urgently.

"We're fine," Heather's calm voice came through, despite the chaos—sirens blaring in the background.

"Why didn't you call me the second this happened?" Adam grumbled.

Here's the deal: the incident was a cruise ship on its way back getting rammed by a cargo freighter. Heavy casualties. And Heather—along with Tatiana, Megan, and her daughter—had been out on that very cruise for a day trip.

"We're really okay, so we didn't want to worry you," Heather said apologetically.

"Stay somewhere safe with Tatiana and the others. I'm on my way," Adam said, rushing out with the kit. "Have you gotten off the ship? What's the damage like...?"

Outside the Medical Center

Ambulances were lined up, loaded with supplies, ready to roll. Bailey led Christina and the team out, all in uniform with trauma kits strapped on.

"Adam, over here!" Christina waved at his back.

"I'm heading out first!" Adam called back, not breaking stride as he bolted to the parking lot.

"Wait up!" Karen popped out of nowhere, charging toward him like a freight train.

"Juno sent me to assist," she said bluntly, hopping into the passenger seat.

Adam didn't have time to tease her. "Buckle up tight," he said, flooring the gas. The sports car roared to life, speeding toward the docks.

Sure, ambulances had sirens to clear the way, but compared to regular cars and drivers? No contest. Adam in his sports car was in a league of his own. With Heather and the others still in a danger zone, he wasn't about to waste a second.

Heather had picked up a lot from Adam and Juno—steady, sharp, quick-thinking. Normally, if she said they were safe, there was an 80% chance they were. But Adam couldn't shake the unease. A chaotic scene like that, with potential explosions? Heather didn't have his crisis instincts. What she thought was safe might not be.

Even if he used her info to model the situation, steer them clear of blast zones, and set up the safest plan, it didn't matter. When you care, logic gets messy. Until he was there, until he got them out himself, he wouldn't relax.

"Heather's tough. She'll be fine," Karen said, glancing at him.

"I know," Adam nodded. "How's Juno holding up?"

"She needs time," Karen replied, rolling her eyes. "It's all you! You're everywhere!"

Adam smirked. He got it.

It was like in *The Big Bang Theory* when Amy griped to Leonard about how jealous she was of Penny and Sheldon's closeness. Six or seven years as his girlfriend, and she still couldn't match that bond. Penny always had Sheldon's back, and Sheldon actually listened to her. Leonard brushed it off at first—until Amy hit him with, "You know Penny's been using Sheldon to tweak the roommate agreement, getting what she wants without ever fighting you, right?"

"Son of a—!" Leonard turned into a total beach bum in that moment.

Hmmm...

Howard, laughing it up on the sidelines, got called out by Leonard too. Raj and Bernadette? Same vibe as Penny and Sheldon. Suddenly, Howard wasn't laughing anymore—another beach bum in the mix.

Apply that to Adam, Juno, and Karen? Karen not turning into a full-on beach bum herself was some serious restraint. Adam and Juno were way closer than Sheldon and Penny or Raj and Bernadette. And Karen's jealous streak? Leonard and Howard's slow-burn envy had nothing on her.

Still, she'd never gone overboard with Adam—just dagger stares and epic eye rolls. It honestly surprised him. In the end, it all turned into endless admiration for Juno. Juno, you're the real MVP! 🏆

On the Road

Adam and Karen chatted about the rescue ahead. Every doctor's got their own style. Karen and Juno were a seamless team, but with Adam? Not guaranteed. Talking it out beforehand was key—smoother teamwork could save more lives.

Chapter 710: The Red Phantom

New York. The Docks.

Total chaos everywhere.

In the distance, a massive cruise ship was pumping out thick, rolling smoke.

The ground was littered with injured people.

Groans of pain filled the air, nonstop.

Mixed in were shouts—adults calling for kids, kids crying for their parents, and gut-wrenching screams from loved ones who couldn't accept that their family was gone.

Medics, cops, and firefighters wove through the crowd, doing their best to save who they could.

The area had been split into four zones, each marked with a colored carpet laid out on the dock, grouping patients by their condition.

Red for critical—treat them now.

Yellow for stable—treatment can wait a bit.

Green for minor injuries—no rush.

And gray... well, gray was for the ones who didn't make it. No emergency care needed, no ambulance ride to the hospital.

Ambulances were only hauling the red-zone critical cases right now. The red area was so packed it was hogging every single one. For a while, even some pretty bad yellow-zone patients—and definitely the green-zone ones—were stuck on-site, getting basic first aid from medics with no shot at a ride.

When Adam and Karen showed up, this was the scene they walked into.

All four zones kept growing.

The gray zone, especially, was stacking up high—way too high. You could see medics pushing stretchers from the red zone, covering the patients' bodies, and wheeling them over to gray. It was chilling, enough to make your skin crawl. 😬

"Adam!"

Heather, tipped off by Adam ahead of time, was already waiting and waved him over.

"Uncle Adam!" Tatiana chirped, bouncing with excitement.

"Hey."

Adam didn't rush straight to the red zone to start saving lives. Instead, he jogged over to Heather and the girls, checking each one for hidden injuries they might not even know about.

He was extra thorough with Megan. She had congenital insensitivity to pain—if she was bleeding internally, she wouldn't feel a thing.

Good news: Adam let out a relieved sigh. Heather had kept them safe. They were all okay.

"Who's this?"

That's when Adam noticed a little girl he didn't recognize.

"She can't find her mom," Megan said, holding the girl's hand protectively. Big-hearted Megan, always looking out for people.

Adam glanced at the girl—her pants were soaked. Obviously, in a disaster like this, losing her mom had scared her so bad she'd wet herself. She was totally out of it, just clinging to Megan, this gentle older-sister figure.

"Take her to change into some dry clothes first, then get her to the hospital for a full checkup," Adam said.

"After that, we'll help her find her mom."

"Got it," Heather agreed, rounding up the group to head out.

She knew Adam's MO. Once he was sure they were safe, he'd be itching to dive in and save lives.

"Be careful on the way," Adam called after them, then bolted for the red zone.

"Wait—he's still got a chance!"

Adam had barely gotten there when he saw a medic give up on a patient after a quick try, ready to send them to gray. He waved them off fast, stepping in to take over.

The medic didn't argue—just handed off the patient and raced to the next one.

Even with trauma teams from all over New York pitching in, there were still way more victims than medics. A lot of the emergency care was half-baked—good enough, but not great.

Adam had no doubt some of those gray-zone bodies could've been saved with a sharper doctor.

"Karen, head over there," he said, mid-rescue. "If you spot anyone with a flicker of life, bring them back here ASAP."

"On it."

Karen didn't hesitate, heading straight over.

Most girls—even some female medics like Meredith—would've froze up or at least flinched at the sight of that growing pile of bodies. But Karen? Nope. She didn't even blink.

"Lydia!"

After some serious effort, Adam stabilized his patient and waved down a medic hopping off an ambulance.

"Dr. Duncan!" Lydia hustled over.

Being a familiar face with a big rep paid off. Everyone was clamoring for an ambulance, but who got one first? That came down to clout. And when Adam spoke, medics listened—first in line, no question.

Other red-zone docs were stuck waiting for the next ride, shaking their heads.

"I've got him stable for now," Adam said quick. "Get him to the medical center—hand him off to Dr. Burke."

He rattled off the details, passed the patient to Lydia, and turned to grab the next one.

"Hey, doc, you can't just snag ambulances like that!" some young out-of-town doctors griped. "We can wait—our patients can't!"

"Then hand me all the ones who can't wait!" Adam shot back.

That shut them up fast.

What kind of confidence did it take to say something like that?

One skeptical doc, not buying it, shoved their patient at Adam—not to mess with him, but because the guy really couldn't wait.

And then, jaws dropped. Adam, cool as anything, saved patient after patient—cases they'd written off as "do what you can and hope." He stabilized them, one by one, and sent them off in ambulances rolling up.

After a few critical saves, Dr. Bailey arrived with Meredith and the crew. What they saw? Adam running the whole red zone like a boss, radiating leader vibes.

The chaos of the critical area had turned into something almost orderly under his watch. Karen was pulling "dead" patients from the gray zone—ones who weren't quite gone yet—back to red for rescue. From there, Adam's team stabilized them and loaded them into ambulances.

Hardly anyone was shifting from red to gray anymore.

Those out-of-town docs who'd been salty? They were all in now, pumped up and following Adam's orders, jumping into save after save.

Whenever they hit a case too tough to crack, they'd yell, "Dr. Duncan!" and shout out what they were dealing with.

Adam, mid-rescue himself, kept a mental tally of every report, sorting them by urgency in his head. Every now and then, he'd pause his own work, tell another doc to take over and hold steady, then sprint to a patient teetering on the edge—one who'd die without him right then.

He'd save them, then zip back to pick up where he left off.

If you sped up the view from above, Adam was like a phantom flashing through the red zone. It was intense, but somehow smooth—like he had it all under control. Silky smooth, baby! 🤖

Meredith and the others rolled up, first hit by the dock's grim mess—minds blank from the shock—then floored by this. They just stood there, mouths open, staring.